

REFUGEEWORKS

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

NEWSLETTER 30
REINVENTING
YOURSELF

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

By Daniel Sturm, *RefugeeWorks*

A recent *Newsweek* article looked at how refugee entrepreneurs gave a fresh burst of energy to a dying Maine mill town. It was a national immigrant success story like so many others. Between 1990 and 2007, refugees, asylees and other immigrants attributed to 45% of the national workforce growth.

Today, refugees are reviving troubled economies and reinventing themselves in the process. An Iraqi calligrapher finds an opportunity to share his art with students at the University of Texas at Austin. Burmese refugees turn a vacant church lot into a thriving farm operation. Somali entrepreneurs launch small businesses that provide translation and in-home care services to the elderly. If you work with refugees, I'm sure you know many more such examples.

The *RefugeeWorks* Employment Quarterly Newsletter features success stories of refugees who are re-making themselves, and rebuilding their communities in the process.

AN IRAQI CALLIGRAPHER RECLAIMS HIS CAREER

By Cindy E. Zieve, *Multicultural Refugee Coalition Community*

Even in the best economic times, refugee employment specialists encourage highly skilled clients to take any job, in order to become self-sufficient. A former restaurant owner may end up cooking in a fast food restaurant, a college professor may fold towels in a hotel laundry and a renowned Islamic calligrapher may work as a cashier.



This is exactly where master calligrapher Muhanned “Mo” Kndiwi found himself – behind the cash register of a Texas Memorial Stadium restaurant at the University of Texas in Austin. His employment specialist at Caritas of Austin had urged him to apply. With an effusive personality, excellent command of English and a willingness to do whatever necessary, Kndiwi edged out more than 200 other applicants.

“I don’t know why I got the job,” he said. “My employment specialist told me to say ‘I can do this’ during the interview. Who’s to say why I got the job with no experience?” Mo related with a smile.

The stadium’s location could not have been more fortuitous. It was directly across the street from the Doty Fine Arts Building, where Stephennie Mulder, an assistant professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, worked. While paying for her meal, Mulder picked up on Kndiwi’s accent and asked him where he was from and how he came to the U.S.

“While explaining his reason for leaving his beloved Baghdad, I learned that Mo was an accomplished calligrapher,” Mulder recalled. “I teach Islamic art, and calligraphy is the

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AN IRAQI CALLIGRAPHER RECLAIMS HIS CAREER <<1

great art form of Islam. Famous calligraphers are as well known to the Islamic world as Michelangelo is to European art.”

Kndiwi was equally surprised to discover that this woman he had just met had spent ten years in Syria, and had lived in Damascus and other parts of the Arab world. He didn't realize that he had begun networking at the University of Texas with this one conversation.

“I asked for his phone number and whether he'd be willing to give demonstrations to my classes on his work as a calligrapher,” Mulder said. “It's very difficult to impress on Western students the complexity and extraordinarily high achievement of the art of calligraphy. He said he'd be happy to.”

The art professor shared Mo's story with her husband, who also taught at the Middle Eastern Studies Department. The news eventually spread to Mahmoud al-Batal, who directs the Arabic Flagship Program, and Mohammad Mohammad, an Associate Professor of Arabic and coordinator of the program.

“Muhanned gave a lecture in Arabic to our students taking part in the Arabic Summer Language Institute,” Dr. Mohammad said. “The students came out with some understanding of the beauty and complexity of Arabic calligraphy.”

Kndiwi also gave three hands-on workshops. “Students enjoyed this the most, as they got to see a master at his craft using traditional tools to produce incredibly beautiful works of art. The only drawback was that one hour was so short,” Dr. Mohammed said. “If our budget allows, we are hoping to bring back Muhanned in the future, with more time allocated to his hands-on workshops.”

The University of Texas Arabic Flagship Program is one of the best in the country, providing a unique opportunity for Kndiwi to apply his skills as a master calligrapher.

Kndiwi is also exploring the possibility of attending the university in the spring, either in the Art Department or in Visual Arts.



As a child, he was mesmerized by the beautiful hand-lettered signs throughout Baghdad. “As my mother would tell you, I often got hurt because I was so busy looking at the beautiful signs I would walk into things and trip. I was always bumping my nose!” At the age of six he decided to become a calligrapher, and soon began studying in earnest when his uncle, a master calligrapher, moved to Baghdad.

Kndiwi opened a sign shop to support himself while creating art. He painted signs during the day and stayed up late at night to do works of art that could take up to a year to complete.

The paintings were large – approximately 2 ½ by 3 ½ feet – and were painted in oil with gold, silver and copper ornamentation.

At the age of 17, Kndiwi became the youngest winner of the prestigious International Arabic Calligraphy Competition presented in Istanbul, Turkey. His record still stands, and the unique design he created then has been imitated by competitors. In order to receive his prize, Kndiwi had to ask for permission from the government to travel to Turkey. Having brought such honor to Iraq, he was given a meeting with Saddam Hussein. Saddam congratulated him in person, presented him with a gold watch and gave permission for him to travel. “When I was in Istanbul, the Turks protected me very well. They were concerned about what Saddam would do if something happened to me while I was there,” Kndiwi says.

Later, Kndiwi was asked to create a Koran for Hussein. He did all of the lettering, with 14 other calligraphers providing the ornamentation. A three-year project, it was completed in 1999. Shortly thereafter, following an encounter at the palace, Kndiwi left Baghdad for Amman (Jordan), where he spent 10 years before immigrating to the United States. Originally assigned to Chicago, he pled with an agent for a warmer climate, which led Austin, Texas to become his new home. Here, a chance meeting while giving change to a professor at a football stadium gave Kndiwi the opportunity to once again apply his skills as a master Islamic calligrapher, and a new opportunity to teach students in one of the country's leading Middle Eastern Studies Departments.

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CONSULTANT'S CORNER: *Jonathan Lucus*



Hello, everyone. This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to reinventing yourself. The root word “invent” means to create something that never before existed. Refugees have to navigate a new culture, a new life and in many cases a new language, when they arrive in the U.S. Over the years, I've seen these new Americans craft a future that, for them, was entirely new. I once had a client who was an absolutely brilliant young Somali woman. She asked me one day if

I thought she could go to college. I was perplexed by her question,

and then she continued, “Everyone has always told me I was not capable enough to go to school.” I realized then that to her the belief that an education was possible had never before existed. I told her that anything was possible and that it was up to her, and no one else, to decide what she was capable of. She smiled and the look in her eyes told me all I needed to know. At that moment, she had reinvented herself. At that moment, something amazing came into existence. That something was the marriage of hope and opportunity. And that's what we are all searching for.

Jonathan Lucus
RefugeeWorks

SUDANESE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT REACHES OUT TO REFUGEES

By Grand Valley State University News and Information Service

She's a mother to a blended family of 15, grandmother to two and "mama" to the growing number of African refugees who live in the Grand Rapids area.

Dorothy Sewe, 38, and her family have lived in Grand Rapids for three years. Through Catholic Human Development Outreach most of her family left a refugee camp in Tanzania and relocated to Western Michigan. Several had to remain behind in Tanzania.

"We were lucky to come here knowing English," Sewe said. "It is a wonderful country. You come without a single cent and people take care of you as if you were a special guest."

Sewe, who has an international diploma in tourism from Geneva, Switzerland, worked until recently as a bank teller in Grand Rapids. Her husband, who has a doctoral degree in mechanical engineering, works in an area factory. Because she preaches the value of an education to her children, Sewe enrolled in Grand Rapids Community College. After earning an associate's degree, she entered Grand Valley State University in 2004. She has since immersed herself in the campus and the community.

Through a GVSU internship with the American Red Cross, Sewe initiated an international tracing service which area residents can use to find missing family members. Prior to Sewe's work, the Grand Rapids Red Cross agency sent such cases to Ann Arbor.

"People are so happy when I tell them we've made contact," she said. "It is such a wonderful feeling that brings joy to my heart."

With support from the Red Cross she is also working with Grand Valley political science professor Jacques Mangala to develop a humanitarian law workshop on campus next year.

Many newly relocated refugees know to seek Sewe's help. "So many refugees know me as a mama," she said. "Most are at GRCC, and I help them fill out financial aid forms and

whatever else they need. I believe education is the key to a better life."

Sewe was among a group of students and faculty honored as outstanding women during a ceremony in March 2005. She received a scholarship from Positive Black Women, a campus group that created an endowed fund, which supports non-traditional women students.



Photo courtesy Grand Valley State University

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE BHUTANESE: AN INTERVIEW WITH K.N. UPRETI

By Faith Ray, *The Baltimore Resettlement Center*

I've known Khada Nanda Upreti (or "K.N.," as his friends call him) since his arrival to Baltimore one year ago, from a refugee camp in southern Nepal. We sat down to talk on a clear Sunday morning on the back deck of his modest apartment, where he lives with his wife and three children. Mr. Upreti told me about his previous day's visit to Pennsylvania, to buy a goat and a few chickens so his family could have fresh milk, eggs and meat. "We miss fresh produce," Mr. Upreti said. "You can buy a live chicken for about eight dollars." He is one of nearly 130 Bhutanese refugees who have resettled in Baltimore in the past year. I've seen him struggle to settle in, and strive to succeed. Mr. Upreti's story is worth hearing.

Ray: Tell me a little about yourself.

I was born in Bhutan in 1972. I stayed there for 17 years and then became a refugee in Nepal. I worked as a volunteer teacher with special needs children in the camp until coming to the United States in August 2008. Professionally, I should say that I'm a teacher, but since entering the U.S. I've found opportunities in the health field. I got a job as an interpreter in the Baltimore Medical System, which provides healthcare to the community. Since then, my energy, my inner heart, says I should continue helping others through healthcare. I'm thinking, in the future, to become a healthcare professional.

Ray: Can you describe your educational and professional background?

I couldn't complete high school because of problems in [Bhutan]. But when I entered the refugee camp, I enrolled in the national board of examinations in India, where I graduated from high school and completed my B.A. in English. In the camp I taught the young people, and after school I taught special needs children. I worked for Caritas Nepal and also volunteered in various NGOs operating within the camp.

Ray: You've found professional jobs pretty quickly when compared with other refugees. How did you do it, especially in this economy?

To get a professional job in the U.S. is easier than it was in the camp, where there were no opportunities. Here, there are a lot of opportunities. I had the passion – I didn't give up. I would think, "That's the thing I need to do." It didn't matter for me if it was day or night, or if I had only gotten one or two hours' sleep. I just continued. My community, my family, the people at the Baltimore Resettlement Center...everybody helped. Whenever I met people, I raised questions. I would always seek advice.



Ray: And right now, you are working three jobs?

Yes. Presently, I'm a youth instructor teaching refugee kids in Baltimore in a program called Helping Other People through Empowerment (HOPE). I was selected as an instructor by the International Rescue Committee. Second, I work as an interpreter in the Baltimore Medical System. I like the job and it pays well. Starting this month, I'm also working as an interpreter at Foreign Born Information and Referral Network (FIRN). I make home visits and work to find out what health-related problems people have. And, as a community, we try to solve those problems. Finally, once or twice a month I work as a medical interpreter for Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Ray: You are juggling quite a schedule. How do you do it? What are some of the challenges?

I was having a lot of challenges. I worked at night at the BWI airport, during the day for 16 hours at the Baltimore Medical System, and on Tuesdays and Fridays at the HOPE program, and also made home visits for Johns Hopkins. But presently I'm managing everything better because I now have a car and a driver's license.



Ray: You're a leader in the Bhutanese community here in Baltimore. How are other Bhutanese adjusting and what suggestions can you offer for the new people arriving?

The cultural differences are real. People are in a dilemma, in a confused position – what to adopt and what not to? As a community member, I try, with the support of my friends, to find the best balance with our new [American] community. Many Bhutanese are coming here illiterate. They're having a lot of problems getting jobs. They cannot understand what their supervisors are saying. There are problems related to health, problems related to language. My suggestion to the new members of the Bhutanese community in the U.S. is to take the necessary training in order to adjust. In the camp, they had time to study. And if they come with a positive attitude, they can do well. My suggestion is to learn English in the camp and to think about one's goals. In the U.S., everyone should have some goal they can put effort into. Get a lot of help and advice from others. Don't hesitate to ask questions.

Ray: You're writing a constitution for a Bhutanese-Nepali cultural program. How is that progressing?

I'm just at the door, at the beginning. The main idea is that we're trying to bring our community under one umbrella. Our children are leaving behind their language. They're picking up English very fast, and every parent is worried about whether they'll forget their native language. The main aim of our organization is to develop a Nepali educational program. We're already conducting some games and sports for our

youth. We're going to begin organizing festivals in Baltimore with our own cultural presentations. In Bhutan we weren't allowed to open organizations or anything else. Now, we need to encourage the youth to get involved, to explain things to our community, and to get support from the different agencies and people in the neighborhood. Within six months, or so, we hope to become established.

Ray: What should refugee agencies across the country know about the Bhutanese community?

The Bhutanese aren't like other refugees in the world. We are different in the sense that we had no rights, no privileges, no freedoms. So when we came to the camp ... I can't say it was as bad as a concentration camp, but it was a fenced refugee camp. Confined. We were not allowed to go to work. Staying 18 years in a camp is a long time. We came from that confined place – from Bhutan – and came to Nepal and were confined again in a refugee camp for 18 years. That's an entire generation. Bhutanese refugees are all unskilled. Not semi-skilled, but unskilled. And many are illiterate, unaware about the world. They don't have a concept about maps, about the moon and the sun, the solar system, the universe. So in this way, through this extreme isolation, they are unique.

Ray: You say the Bhutanese are coming in unskilled, unschooled, and unaware, but what are some positive qualities that will help them adjust to life here?

They're ready to do any sort of work. They grew up in the mountains, full of stones and rocks. But they grew vegetables and sustained their life self-sufficiently, without depending upon others. So that is a positive strength. The ladies are extraordinary. They can go to work and also take care of the family, the house and everything else. My wife works as a housekeeper at the Hilton, downtown, and also does the housekeeping at home. I should say – am proud to say – that in two to three years the Bhutanese community in the U.S. will be very prosperous. In the future, you'll even find doctors. You will find engineers, here, among the Bhutanese refugee families. They came unskilled, but in a few years, I assure you that they will do something better. Even the old people with the big glasses are ready to study! Already some people have started continuing their education. Our children are ready to learn. Though they find it difficult to adjust, they can continue. People are ready to learn.

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EDUCATING IRAQI REFUGEES ON A SHOESTRING

By Alessandra Manfre, *The Iraqi Student Project*

When Theresa Kubasak and Gabe Huck moved to Damascus (Syria) in 2004, their main purpose was to learn Arabic. But, as the war in Iraq waged on, and more and more Iraqis arrived in Syria to escape the violence, the two American transplants felt a need to take action and support the young refugees who had no educational opportunities beyond high school. Drawing from years of experience working with an organization dedicated to promoting conflict resolution in the Middle East, they developed a nonprofit group called The Iraqi Student Project (ISP).

The vision of ISP is to provide a path for qualified, college-age Iraqi refugees to earn undergraduate degrees in the U.S. This will enable a generation of young Iraqis to eventually return with the skills they need to help rebuild their home country. Founded in October 2007, ISP's mission is to obtain full tuition waivers from participating colleges, to foster support networks that fundraise for expenses not covered by the college and to provide emotional support for the students. Every dollar donated to an ISP support network has already been matched and surpassed (usually tripled) by the college's tuition waiver – i.e. education on a shoestring. The organization is run by two staff members whose principle responsibility is to secure tuition waivers for students and work with the support networks.

ISP differs from traditional American refugee service organizations because the students will eventually leave the U.S. when their F-1 International Student Visas expire, so they won't be resettled permanently. Students involved in the program will return to Iraq as soon as the country becomes politically stable. In the meantime, their exact futures are uncertain. They've had to be courageous. They've left family, friends and country behind in order to pursue their educations.

Students participate in a rigorous preparatory program during the year prior to their departure. The training includes three to four English courses per week, with a focus on grammar, reading comprehension, conversational skills and TOEFL preparation. ISP students also participate in cultural acclimation training to ensure they know what to expect when they arrive at a U.S. campus. Finally, they participate in self-reflection and cathartic release classes during a weekly Writer's Workshop taught by Theresa in Damascus.

With 14 students who arrived in August 2008, and an additional 21 beginning their freshman year in the coming weeks, ISP is well on its way to becoming an established program. Theresa and Gabe, and their shoestring operation, are creating real change, one education at a time.



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RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES WITH SKILLED AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS

By Daniel Sturm, *RefugeeWorks*

Business Professionals

A Match Made in Philadelphia (The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians)

This website connects highly skilled immigrant workers with the employers who need them.

<http://tinyurl.com/mvz12d>

Refugee Individual Development Accounts (Institute for Social and Economic Development)

This is a technical assistance project for IDA programs that are recruiting low-income refugee savers to provide financial literacy training and coach clients as they save money for homes, cars and new business.

<http://www.ised.us/projects/refugee-ida>

Credential Evaluation

Credential Evaluation (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers)

AACRAO, the national professional organization for admissions and credential evaluation, provides detailed information on the entire process. The organization also offers its own credential evaluation service.

<http://www.aacrao.org/international/foreignEdCred.cfm>

Licensing Information Website for Illinois Professions (Upwardly Global)

This website helps immigrant professionals understand the licensing process for 10 careers regulated in Illinois.

<http://www.careersfornewamericans.org>

National Conference on Refugee Professional Recertification Networking Site (*RefugeeWorks*)

Participants from the refugee professional recertification conference established this networking site, where recertification conference presentations have been posted and the discussion continues.

<http://recertification.ning.com>

Occupational Licensure Requirements (U.S. Department of Labor)

The Employment and Training Administration's Licensed Occupations website provides detailed information for various professional licenses, state by state.

<http://tinyurl.com/3dlwfd>

World Education Services

WES provides more than 50,000 evaluations each year that are accepted by thousands of academic institutions, employers, licensing and certification boards and government agencies in the U.S. and Canada.

<https://www.wes.org>

Engineering, Green Jobs, IT

Engineering and Science Career Network

This site links association job boards, bringing candidates and recruiters together in an expanded employment network.

<http://engineeringandsciencecareernetwork.com>

Green Pathways Out of Poverty: Workforce Development Initiatives (Green for All)

This link provides questions and answers for organizations interested in developing green workforce training programs.

<http://tinyurl.com/m583f9>

Green Jobs for Refugees (*RefugeeWorks* Employment Quarterly Newsletter No. 28)

This *RefugeeWorks* newsletter analyzes job opportunities for refugees in the green-collar economy.

http://www.refugeeworks.org/downloads/rwnews_28.pdf

Green Jobs Guidebook (Environmental Defense Fund)

This guidebook provides information on 45 job types for high school grads (many paying more than \$25 per hour), job training and placement programs and listings of valuable apprenticeship programs.

<http://www.edf.org/article.cfm?contentID=8466>





Opportunities for Refugee Engineers (*RefugeeWorks* Guide No. 1)

RefugeeWorks has released a guide for foreign-trained engineers seeking to practice their profession in the U.S.

<http://www.refugeeworks.org/downloads/RefugeeWorksEngineeringGuide.pdf>

Healthcare Careers

Healthcare Hotspots (*RefugeeWorks* Employment Quarterly Newsletter No. 25)

This *RefugeeWorks* newsletter analyzes job opportunities for refugees in the healthcare fields.

http://www.refugeeworks.org/downloads/rwnews_25.pdf

International Healthcare Workers Assistance (Welcome Back Initiative)

The WBI is an international healthcare workers assistance center. It serves as an information and resource center for people who have received their formal education and training in a health field outside of the U.S.

<http://welcomebackinitiative.org>

Recertification Fact Sheets (U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement)

ORR has produced three fact sheets on the recertification of refugee professionals.

<http://tinyurl.com/lyfybk>

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring Partnership of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council

This site overviews a collaboration between community organizations and corporate partners that bring skilled immigrants together with established professionals, in job-specific mentoring relationships.

<http://www.thementoringpartnership.com>

Peer Resources (The National Registry of Certified Peer Trainers and Training Consultants)

This site offers a directory of mentoring programs with descriptions of how they work and who to contact.

<http://www.mentors.ca>

Social Networking and Peer Mentoring (*RefugeeWorks* Employment Quarterly Newsletter No. 26)

This *RefugeeWorks* Newsletter highlights promising networking practices and peer mentoring programs.

http://www.refugeeworks.org/downloads/rwnews_26.pdf

Teaching Careers

Becoming a Teacher in Pennsylvania (The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians)

This guide includes a job description, prospects, salary ranges, employers and the certification processes needed.

<http://welcomingcenter.org/documents/TeacherGuide.pdf>

Individual Development Accounts (Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis)

This website is a comprehensive guide to help those interested in IDAs—practitioners, researchers and policy analysts.

<http://tinyurl.com/nobcy4>

National Center for Alternative Certification

The National Center for Alternative Certification is a one-stop, comprehensive clearinghouse for information about alternative routes to certification in the United States.

<http://www.teach-now.org>

National Clearinghouse on Paraeducator Resources

This education information clearinghouse provides a forum to further the discussion on how to bring talented paraeducators into the ranks of our nation's teaching force.

<http://tinyurl.com/lot8ru>

Teachers-Teachers.com

This job search engine is designed to save instructors time and money as they search for great jobs in education.

<http://www.teachers-teachers.com>

REFUGEEWORKS LAUNCHES NETWORK FOR REFUGEE PROFESSIONALS

By Daniel Sturm, *RefugeeWorks*

A client happy to reach the shores of the U.S. floods you with questions. “I’m a medical doctor. Where can I go to get my credentials evaluated? Do you know of a local physician who can walk me through the recertification process? And in the meantime, can you help me find a professional job?” Many of you are all too familiar with this scenario.

Refugee employment specialists have increasingly become frustrated with the limited job opportunities for their highly skilled clients. In the current job climate, matching clients with jobs that require “niche” specializations is difficult. As a result, many skilled refugees are underemployed or working in sectors that do not utilize their skills. Refugees with engineering degrees end up delivering pizzas and foreign-trained nurses work in fast food restaurants and janitorial services. The result is a tragic waste of human talent and expertise.

To tackle some of these issues, *RefugeeWorks* recently launched a networking site for refugee professionals. As the first networking site for refugees seeking to reclaim their careers, it features key resources and allows you to freely access downloadable documents. Drawing from the best of other social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, the website also encourages old-fashioned networking among its more than 200 members. Refugees, employment specialists and others are encouraged to seek peer advice from five interactive groups representing healthcare professionals, teachers, engineers, nonprofit and business professionals.

The networking site was launched during the National Conference on Refugee Professional Recertification in East Lansing, Michigan. The initiative was kicked off by Jeff Brown, a volunteer for The List Project, who gave a talk about the successful expansion utilization of social networking software for nonprofits. If you missed this conference, you are particularly encouraged to check out www.recertification.ning.com, where presentations have been posted and the discussion continues. Feel free to invite other colleagues and foreign-trained professionals who may be interested in joining this exciting new platform.



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NEW RESOURCE GUIDE AVAILABLE FOR ENGINEERS

By Daniel Sturm, *RefugeeWorks*

RefugeeWorks has released a guide for foreign-trained engineers who are seeking to practice their profession in the U.S. It describes the structure and direction of the engineering profession and workforce composition, as well as the skills, training and credentials needed to advance in the field. This report is the first of a series of guidebooks geared towards refugees with skilled and professional backgrounds. *RefugeeWorks*' Managing Editor, Daniel Sturm, sat down with the report's author, Linda Rabben.



Sturm: What are the goals of your project?

Many job developers are placing clients with skilled and professional backgrounds in entry-level positions. But, with an increasing number of professionals entering the U.S., employment counselors realize they need more specialized information to help clients reenter their fields of training. What are the steps for recertification? What are the job prospects? The guide's goal is to fill this information gap.

Sturm: What type of advice do you offer?

Every guide is designed to address the following questions: First, what is the structure of the profession in question? Next, how do you train to become an engineer or a doctor in the U.S.? How difficult is it to transfer credentials from abroad to the U.S.? How do people approach the job search for a specific profession? The guides also shed light on employment trends and availability. Finally, do you need a certain kind of certificate? Of course, the regulations vary from state to state. For example, every state requires physicians to be licensed. But that's not the case with engineers.

Sturm: The reports will highlight opportunities for refugee engineers, teachers, doctors, nurses and dentists. Why did you choose these professions?

My selection is based on an analysis of labor market trends as well as refugees' professional backgrounds. Many refugee professionals are currently coming to this country with backgrounds in engineering, and many others have work experience in the healthcare industry. It's also interesting that a significant portion of women, who often end up staying at home in the U.S., have worked as teachers in their home countries. In future reports, we plan to highlight job opportunities in other healthcare professions such as pharmacists, ultrasound and radiology technicians. These jobs are licensed, but the requirements are not as extensive as they are for physicians.

Sturm: In light of the recession's impact, do you have any positive news for refugees?

Yes. Particularly the healthcare industry is going to face shortages as a result of aging. And people tend to receive the most intensive care at the end of their lives. That's good news for refugees entering these fields. A large number of nursing programs have sprung up across the country. Often, such programs provide stipends, case management and community connections. It's being made very easy for people to become nurses. It's a profession that foreign-born physicians could train in if it becomes too difficult for them to recertify as physicians. Also, I show in this report how foreign-born professionals form study groups to prepare for exams, buy books and pool other resources. Ultimately, the best resource for refugee professionals are the peer networks of refugees themselves.

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REFUGEEWORKS ON THE ROAD

We'd like to thank everyone for helping to make *RefugeeWorks'* first recertification conference a success. 175 participants who attended **The National Conference on Refugee Professional Recertification** used the opportunity to present working models and exchange ideas. The conference also received excellent news coverage. A compilation of **new resource materials** focusing on recertification is now available on the conference website, at www.tinyurl.com/lxnk49. Below are a few visual impressions. More photos of the conference can be accessed at <http://recertification.ning.com/photo>

Pictures by Mohamed Ly





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NEWSLETTER 30 REINVENTING YOURSELF

“ In two to three years the Bhutanese community in the U.S. will be very prosperous. In the future, you will find doctors and engineers among the Bhutanese refugee families.”

*Khada Nanda Upreti, International Rescue Committee
See “Spotlight on the Bhutanese,” p. 4*



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